

## Message Text

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22/46

ACTION NEA-10

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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY JIDDA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 5792

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, LE

DTJECT: MEETING WITH SAEB SALAM

REF: BEIRUT 5755

1. SUMMARY: SAEB SALAM'S EXPRESSION OF SORROW RE MURDER OF MELOY AND WARING GAVE ME OPENING TO URGE THAT HE USE HIS INFLUENCE TO SEE THAT MURDERS ARE BROUGHT TO JUSTICE. SALAM PLACED MUCH OF BLAME FOR CURRENT LEBANESE SITUATION ON SYRIANS, WHO HE CLAIMED HAD ALIENATED

ALL LEBANESE MOSLEMS. HE ACCUSED SYRIA AND U.S. OF MANIPULATING SARKIS ELECTION AS PRESIDENT AND CONTENTED THAT SARKIS (IN CONTRAST TO RAYMOND EDDE) HAS NO POLITICAL FOLLOWING. IN ADDITION, HE CLAIMED SARKIS IS SURROUNDED BY CORRUPT INDIVIDUALS. NEVERTHELESS, SINCE HE HAS BEEN PICKED, ALL LEBANESE SHOULD LINE UP BEHIND HIM.  
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SALAM WELCOMED CONCEPT OF ROUNDTABLE CONFERENCE, BUT SAID CEASEFIRE MUST COME FIRST. EGYPT'S STAR IN ARAB WORLD, HE BELIEVED, HAS NOW RISEN AT SYRIA'S EXPENSE. END SUMMARY.

2. IN PROCEEDING TO MY MEETING JULY 1 WITH SAEB SALAM, FORMER PRIME MINISTER, THERE WAS MUCH MORE NORMAL ACTIVITY ALONG THE ROUTE THAN THE DAY I CALLED ON PRIME MINISTER KARAME (JUNE 29). IN THE LATTER INSTANCE THE ROADS WE PASSED THROUGH WERE ALMOST DESERTED--THE BATTLES OF TELL ZAATAR AND JISR AL-BASHA WERE AT THEIR HEIGHT. YESTERDAY, PEOPLE WERE WALKING THE SIDEWALKS, AND MAKESHIFT SHOPS LINED THE SEASIDE CORNICHE.

3. MY MEETING WITH SAEB SALAM JULY 1, WHICH LASTED TWO HOURS (HALF HOUR LONGER THAN THE MEETING WITH KARAME), BEGAN WITH HIS EXPRESSING HIS SORROW ON DEATH OF AMBASSADOR MELOY AND BOB WARING. HE ASKED IF WE KNEW WHO HAD COMMITTED THE MURDERS. I REPLIED IN THE NEGATIVE AND SAID IT WOULD BE USEFUL IF HE COULD HELP US TO GET MORE INFORMATION. HE AGREED IMMEDIATELY TO RAISE THE QUESTION WITH THE PEOPLE CARRYING OUT THE INVESTIGATION (I.E. PALESTINIANS). I ADDED THAT WE WOULD EXPECT IN SUCH A CASE FOR THE CRIMINALS TO BE TRIED AND PENALTY OF DEATH IMPOSED. HE SAID MOST IMPORTANT THING IS TO FIND OUT WHY THEY DID IT AND WHO ORDERED THE MEN TO DO IT. HE ADDED THAT HE THOUGHT PALESTINIANS CARRYING OUT THE INVESTIGATION HAD NOT YET FOUND THE PEOPLE WHO ACTUALLY DID THE KILLING.

3. I EXPLAINED TO SALAM THE FRAME OF REFERENCE FOR MY PRESENCE IN LEBANON AND STRESSED THAT I HAD NO ANSWER TO LEBANON'S PROBLEMS. I WAS, HOWEVER, PREPARED TO BE HELPFUL IF THERE WAS ANYTHING THE U.S. COULD USEFULLY DO. I INTENDED TO KEEP A RELATIVELY LOW PROFILE. AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, I WANTED TO BE IN TOUCH WITH THE CHRISTIANS ON THE OTHER SIDE. SALAM AGREED THAT I SHOULD DO SO WHENEVER I COULD.

4. I STRESSED THAT THE U.S. VIGOROUSLY OPPOSES PARTITION OF LEBANON, DESPITE RUMORS TO CONTRARY CIRCULATING IN MOSLEM QUARTERS. ALSO, U.S. DOES NOT CONDONE MILITARY INTERVENTION IN LEBANON, DESPITE CONTRARY REPORTS. WHEN SALAM INDICATED THAT THERE SEEMED TO BE SOME TRUTH TO POPULAR BELIEF OF EXISTENCE OF A CONSPIRACY BETWEEN SYRIA, U.S., ISRAEL AND L  
C EN CHRISTIANS,  
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I RESPONDED THAT THIS IS UNTRUE. FURTHERMORE, U.S. SUPPORTS NO FACTIO  
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IN LEBANON AND WANTS ONLY TO SEE PEACE AND STABILITY RESTORED TO AN INDEPENDENT LEBANON IN FRAMEWORK OF UNITY AND COHESION.

5. SALAM SAID HE WAS PREPARED TO ACCEPT FACT THAT U.S. DOES NOT FAVOR PARTITION OF LEBANON BUT, FRANKLY, HE COULD NOT HELP BUT FEEL THAT SYRIA WOULD NOT HAVE ACTED AS IT DID WITHOUT U.S. ENDORSEMENT PLUS CLOSE COORDINATION WITH ISRAEL. THERE IS BOUND TO BE SUSPICION OF U.S. MOTIVES AND ACTIONS IN VIEW OF LONG-ESTABLISHED AND STRONG U.S. SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL. THIS IS WHY, HE CONTINUED, SOVIET AMBASSADOR TODAY IN LEBANON IS FETED EVEN THOUGH LEBANESE DO NOT LIKE COMMUNITOU HE ALLUDED TO "INCAPABILITY" OF USG TO INTRODUCE

TROOPS INTO LEBANON, AND SAID THIS IS GOOD THING. I AGREED USG WOULD NOT MILITARILY INTERVENE IN LEBANON, BUT STATED THAT REASON FOR THIS IS THAT SUCH A MOVE WOULD HURT U.S. INTERESTS ALL OVER ARAB WORLD.

6. SALAM WAS HIGHLY CRITICAL OF THE SYRIANS. HE DEPLORED THEIR BEHAVIOR IN LEBANON AND BLAMED THEM IN LARGE MEASURE FOR PRESENT STATE OF AFFAIRS. HE SAID THE SYRIANS BEAR A GREAT DEAL OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE EROSION OF SITUATION IN LEBANON BECAUSE THEY HAD FIRST TRIED TO USE SAIQA AS THEIR INSTRUMENT IN LEBANON. THIS' HAD ANTAGONIZED LEBANESE, PARTICULARLY SINCE SAIQA MISBEHAVED, LOOTING ALMOST EVERYTHING IN SIGHT. SYRIANS HAD THOUGHT NAIVELY THAT SOMEHOW SAIQA COULD PRESERVE SYRIA'S INTERESTS IN LEBANON, BUT SAIQA WAS SOUNDLY DEFEATED. NOW THE SYRIANS HAD MADE EVERY MOSLEM AN ENEMY AND THEY SHOULD LEAVE LEBANON. SALAM SAID U.S. MUST BE HAPPY TO SEE THE ARABS IN DISARRAY BECAUSE THIS WEAKENS THE ARABS. I RESPONDED THAT THIS IS ALSO UNTRUE AND, IF IT WOULD BE HELPFUL, I WOULD BE SAYING AS MUCH TO THE PRESS. SALAM SAID THAT ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS. AMONG OTHER THINGS, I OBSERVED, ARAB DISARRAY IMPEDED ARAB-ISRAELI PEACE NEGOTIATIONS, TO WHICH WE ATTACH THE GREATEST IMPORTANCE.

7. SALAM NOTED THAT THE CONSPIRACY THEORY HAD BEEN PROPOUNDED PUBLICLY BY RAYMOND EDDE FOR THE PAST YEAR AND A HALF. HE ACCUSED US OF HAVING THEREFORE BEEN ANTI-EDDE IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. LAMBRAKIS, WHO WAS ALSO PRESENT, AND I DENIED U.S. HAD TAKEN ANY POSITION IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. I SAID THAT WE HAD NO OBJECTI ON TO RAYMOND EDDE, EVENTHOUGH HE IS PRONE TO MAKE IRRESPONSIBLE CONFIDENTIAL

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AND INACCURATE ALLEGATIONS. SALAM INSISTED THAT MOST LEBANESE BELIEVED THAT U.S. AS WELL AS SYRIANS HAD BACKED SARKIS. OTHERWISE, EDDE WOULD HAVE BEEN ELECTED. HE WAS UNABLE TO EXPLAIN HOW THIS COULD BE THE CASE IF AT THE SAME TIME LEBANESE HAD LOSS OF CONFIDENCE IN USG POLICY.

8. IF EDDE HAD BECOME PRESIDENT, SALAM CONTINUED, HE WOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DRAW 90 PER CENT OF MARONITE SUPPORT AWAY FROM TRADITIONAL EXTREMISTS SUCH AS GEMAYEL, CHAMOUN AND FRANGIE. SARKIS, ON OTHER HAND, HAS NO POLITICAL FOLLOWING. HE SAID EDDE ACTUALLY POSSESSED A MAJORITY OF THE VOTES, AND PROBABLY WOULD HAVE BEEN ELECTED PRESIDENT IN MARCH WHEN PARLIAMENT PRESENTED FRANGIE WITH A PETITION FOR HIS RESIGNATWON SIGNED BY 66 DEPUTIES. SALAM PROFESSED TO KNOW FOR A FACT THAT FRANGIE WAS PREPARED TO RESIGN THAT MORNING, BUT CHANGED HIS MIND AFTER HE GOT A TELEPHONE CALL FROM PRESIDENT ASSAD IN DAMASCUS. THIS, HE STATED, WAS ANOTHER INSTANCE OF SYRIAN RESPONSIBILITY FOR LEBANON'S PROBLEMS. SALAM WENT ON TO SAY THAT HE IS CONVINCED THAT SYRIA HAS DESIGNS ON THE BEKAA. HE ALLEGED THAT SYRIA IS NOW IN THE PROCESS OF INTEGRATING THE SCHOOL SYSTEM THERE INTO THE SYRIAN SCHOOL SYSTEM.

9. SALAM REITERATED HIS VIEW THAT SARKIS WAS ELECTED BY SYRIAN

BACKING. BEIDES NOT HAVING POLITICAL SUPPORT AMONG THE MARONITES, SARKIS HAS SURROUNDED HIMSELF WITH CHEHABISTS AND A GROUP OF CORRUPT PEOPLE, MANY OF WHOM HAVE BEEN AROUND FRANGIE (SUCH AS SHEIKH BUTROS KHOURY). NEVERTHELESS, NOW THAT HE IS PRESIDENT, CONTINUED SALAM, THERE IS NO CHOICE BUT TO LINE UP BEHIND SARKIS AND TRY TO HELP HIM.

10. SALAM SAID IT WAS A GREAT MISTAKE TO REFER TO CHRISTIAN AND MOSLEM FACTIONS, RESPECTIVELY, AS "RIGHTISTS" AND "LEFTISTS." MAJORITY OF MOSLEMS ARE NOT TO THE LEFT POLITICALLY. LEBANESE DO NOT LIKE OR WANT COMMUNISM.

11. WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING EXISTENCE OF A PALESTINIAN PROBLEM IN LEBANON, AS WELL AS CONFESSIONAL CONFLICT, SALAM REVERTED TO THEME THAT NEFARIOUS OUTSIDE INFLUENCES, CHIEFLY THE SYRIANS, WERE PRIMARIL Y RESPONSIBLE FOR STIRRING THINGS UP. HE NOTED THAT THE PROPOSAL TO HOLD A ROUNDTABLE CONFERENCE HAD BEEN ONE OF HIS EARLIEST IDEAS WHEN SOME OONTHS AGO HE HAD ACTIVATED THE FORMATION OF THE DIALOGUE CONFIDENTIAL

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COMMITTEE. HOWEVER, DIALOGUE COMMITTEE, WHICH SHOULD HAVE BEEN LIMITED TO FEW KEY INDIVIDUALS, HAD BEEN CONSTITUTED WITH TOO MANY REPRESENTATIVES FROM JUMBLATT'S LEFTIST PARTIES, FOR EXAMPLE, AND HAD NEVER GOTTEN GOING. BY THE SAME TOKEN, HE WONDERED IF A ROUNDTABLE CONFERENCE WERE POSSIBLE AT THIS TIME WHILE FIGHTING CONTINUED. A CEASEFIRE OUGHT TO BE THE FIRST STEP.

12. SALAM NOTED THAT EGYPT HAS NOW ONCE AGAIN BECOME POPULAR IN ARAB WORLD AT SYRIA'S EXPENSE. ARABS ARE NOW SAYING THAT AT LEAST SADAT HAS BEEN DIRECT AND ABOVEBOARD IN AGREEMENTS HE NEGOTIATED WITH ISRAEL RE SINAI. ASSAD, ON OTHER HAND, IS CONSIDERED UNDERHANDED AND DEVIOUS. EGYPT HAS BENEFITED BY BECOMING CH TWVON#OF PALESTINIANS.

13. SAEB SALAM'S REMARKS ON TOPICS OF MORE CURRENT INTEREST WERE REPORTED IN BEIRUT 5755.

14. COMMENT: SAEB SALAM REMAINS AN INTERESTING AND CHARMING PERSON TO TALK TO. THOUGH SEPTUAGENARIAN AND VOLUBLE, HE KEEPS UP WITH THE TIMES REASONABLY WELL. MANY OF HIS INTERPRETATIONS OF EVENTS FIT INTO A GENERAL PATTERN WHICH IS SHARED BY MARONITE LEADERS SUCH AS RAYMOND EDDE AND RIVAL MOSLEM TRADITIONALISTS SUCH AS KARAME. HE CONSIDERS JUMBLATT A CONSERVATIVE LIKE HIMSELF, THOUGH ONE WHO IS PLAYING A DANGEROUS GAME WITH THE LEFT. HE SEEMS TO HAVE THE SAME FAITH KARAME EXPRESSED TO ME A FEW DAYS AGO THAT THE LEBANESE CAN SETTLE THEIR DIFFERENCES REASONABLY WELL IF ONLY OUTSIDERS--PARTICULARLY THE SYRIANS--WILL PERMIT THEM TO DO SO. ALTHOUGH NOT ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT IN A TIME OF ARMED WARFARE, HE REMAINS AN INFLUENTIAL POLITICIAN BEHIND THE SCENES AT LEAST UNTIL SUCH TIME AS THE YOUNGER GENERATION PRODUCES POLITICIANS OF NOTE RATHER THAN JUST FIGHTERS.

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NOTE BY OC/T: AS RECEIVED.

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